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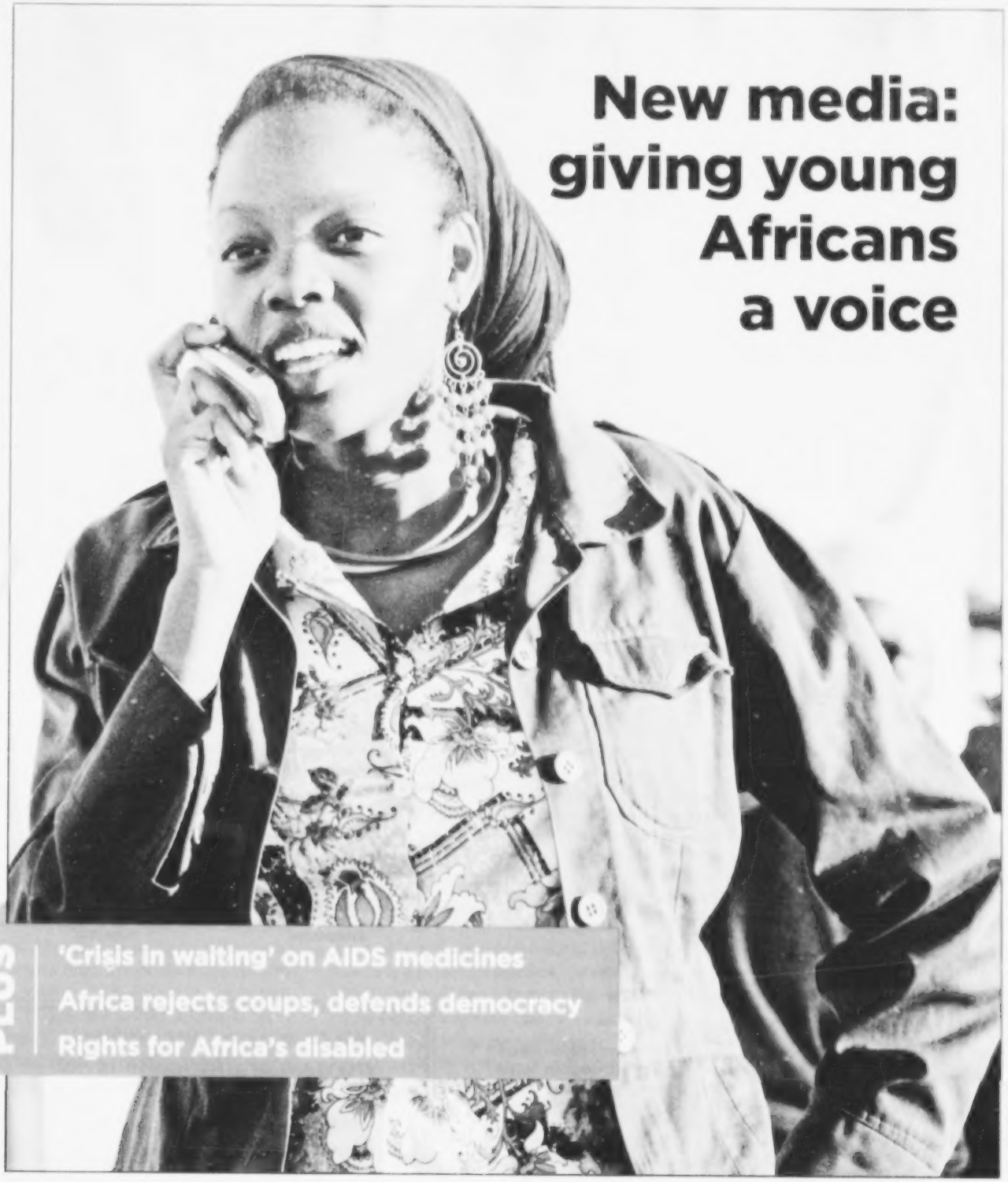

New media: giving young Africans a voice

PLUS

'Crisis in waiting' on AIDS medicines

Africa rejects coups, defends democracy

Rights for Africa's disabled

AfricaRenewal

Features

Young Africans put technology to new uses 3

Africa defends democratic rule 10

A 'crisis in waiting' for AIDS patients 16

Africa's disabled will not be forgotten 18

Also in this Issue

MDGs: time to step up. 5

Africa's displaced people: out of the shadows . . . 6

Even with peace, Liberia's women struggle 8

'Stability is based on democracy'
Interview with Said Djinnit 13

Africans extend solidarity to Haiti 22

Departments

Agenda 23

Books 23

Watch 24

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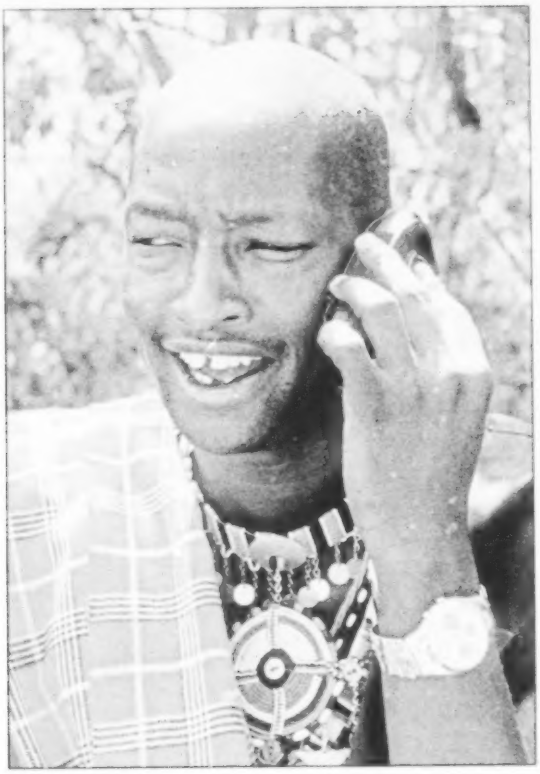
Young Africans put technology to new uses

Kenyan software a tool for political participation

By **Andre-Michel Essoungou**



Ushahidi map of violence in Kenya, 2008. Each dot represents a report of violence submitted by text message, e-mail or Web submission. Users can click on a dot to get more information about the incident.

Ushahidi illustrates how young Africans are using new technologies to enter the political arena. According to a study by Harvard University scholars,[1] Ushahidi has been the most comprehensive tool in gathering crisis-related information in Kenya. The platform, the report adds, performed better than mainstream media by reporting more cases of violence and covering a wider geographic area.

Although the website was intended mainly to get the word out about the crisis in Kenya, it also functioned as a gateway for increased political participation. Using their cell phones, ordinary citizens helped counter rumours and what they perceived to be official underestimations. They were able to help record trends and patterns of violent incidents.

Democratizing information

In an e-mail to *Africa Renewal*, David Hersman, one of Ushahidi's co-founders, affirms that the "only goal was to create a simple means for ordinary Kenyans to say what was going on." The idea, he adds, was "to democratize information in what was a very closed media at the time."

Juliana Rotich, another Ushahidi co-founder, shares that view. Yet she notes the limited impact the platform had within Kenya at the time. "No communication campaign was designed to help people learn about the platform. Those who used it were mostly people already connected to the Internet regularly. "We were not able to reach a critical mass of people in the country, partly because we did not get much local awareness," Ms. Rotich told *Africa Renewal*. "But at the same time, it did help since no one threatened to shut us down."

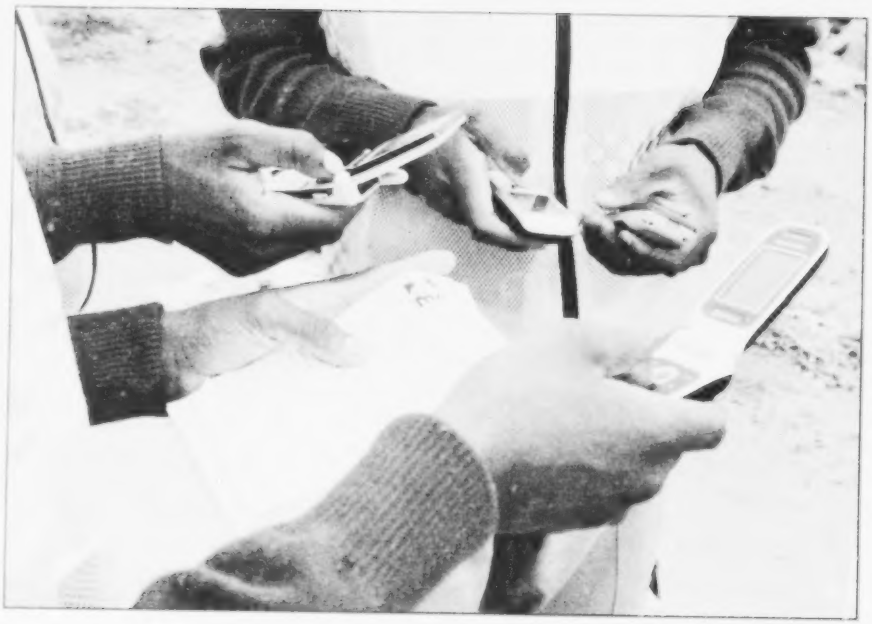
By allowing young Africans to contribute to ongoing discussions and events, new technologies provide them with unparalleled access to political debate. "In the African context, being able to voice one's opinion freely is not that easy, especially for young people," comments Theophile Kouamouo, who has run IvoireBlog, a lively blogging platform in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, since December 2007. Having set up Abidjan Blog-camps,

[1] Patrick Meier and Kate Brodock, "Crisis Mapping Kenya's Election Violence: Comparing Mainstream News, Citizen Journalism and Ushahidi." (Boston: Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Harvard University, 2008). Web <http://irevolution.wordpress.com/2008/10/23/mapping-kenyas-election-violence/>.

A free, online seminar in which bloggers from around the country regularly share views and experiences, Mr. Kouamouo believes that African bloggers are walking in the steps of independent media outlets that led the battle for free speech in the early 1990s. "This is part of our efforts in building a democratic society," he explained to *Africa Renewal*.

The similar site CongoBlog was launched in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) by Cédric Kalonji, a young citizen journalist from Kinshasa. He too aims at providing better access to the public sphere for young Congolese. CongoBlog has lately come to function like a news agency, with correspondents based in all regions of the country.

Speaking to *Africa Renewal*, Ms. Okolloh of Ushahidi notes that in the digital arena "the barriers to entry are generally lower and the space more open" than with traditional media. Her colleague Mr. Hersman concurs. "Technology is one of the few ways that young Africans can bypass the inefficiencies in the system that allow the status quo to hold on," he says. "It lowers the barriers to entry for everyone to get involved and be heard."



From Kenya to the world

Since Ushahidi (which is also downloadable software) was designed to be used by ordinary people, allowing users to report an incident by filling in a very simple form with a description of what happened and when it took place, it has proven to be easily adaptable. The software has been used to help rescue victims in Haiti in the wake of a devastating earthquake in January. It has also been used to monitor violence in the DRC, South Africa and Gaza.

In addition, Ushahidi has helped people to use cell phones and the Internet to track the availability of medicines in pharmacies in Kenya, Uganda, Malawi and Zambia.

The platform allows ordinary people to report vote tallies as they are compiled. Cuidemos el Voto, an independent online mapping project in Mexico, used Ushahidi to monitor the last federal elections. So did Vote Report India, a collaborative citizen-driven election monitoring initiative, for the 2009 Indian general elections. Ironically, in February people in Washington, DC, the US capital, relied on the Kenyan software to help organize snow removal during a massive storm.

Revolutionary changes

Long before this latest trend, Africans have been using new technologies for various purposes with positive results, including in business, health care, distance learning and banking (see *Africa Renewal*, January 2008 and April 2008). According to the latest *African Economic Outlook* report of the industrialized countries' Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Africa is helping to sustain parts of the African economy during these times of economic turbulence.

The recent use of such technologies in the political field is taking place amidst revolutionary technological changes across the continent. Africa's mobile phone industry is growing at twice the global rate, according to the International Telecommunications Union. "The mobile phone, easy to carry around, and whose infrastructure is cheaper to deploy, has led Africa's revolution," adds the OECD report. As major undersea cables are being laid off the east and west coasts of the continent, broadband Internet access is also expected to vastly improve, a fact that prompts some to predict an end to the "digital divide" — the gap between those who have access to ICTs and those who do not.

Africa's political bodies are striving to catch up. In late January an African Union (AU) summit took up the theme of ICT links to development. Earlier, in 2007, the continental body adopted a science and technology plan of action and asked the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to help. Talks are being held among the OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank, while UNESCO is supporting a review of science, technology and innovation in 20 African countries. Under the AU's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), all primary and secondary schools are to become "e-schools," with computers, software and Internet access, by 2025 (see *Africa Renewal*, April 2007).

All these are welcome developments, notes Ushahidi's Ms. Rotich. Africa, she concludes, "should invest in its brilliant minds and encourage its entrepreneurs." ■

Millennium Development Goals: time to step up

Some progress in Africa, but more is needed, argues UN Secretary-General

By **Andre-Michel Essoungou**

Some might view the United Nations' latest update on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a distressing catalogue of unmet ambitions. Others could find in it reasons to believe in the possibility of reaching the targets. In reality, says a report by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon entitled "Keeping the Promise," there have been both successes and shortfalls. Therefore Mr. Ban is urging world leaders (expected at a UN General Assembly Summit on the MDGs in September) to keep to their pledges to support economic and social progress for the world's most vulnerable people.

The MDGs are a set of eight concrete, measurable objectives, adopted by world leaders in 2000 and set to be achieved by 2015.

In reviewing the situation a decade after the goals were adopted, the report notes that Africa is doing a lot right. Across the continent access to primary education has increased massively, gains have been made in fighting the AIDS epidemic and there have been huge improvements in child health.

Sub-Saharan Africa recorded the world's fastest growth in primary school enrolment in recent years, with enrolment rising from 58 per cent in 2000 to 74 per cent in 2007, although it still lags behind other developing regions. A number of countries, including Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Ghana, Ethiopia, Malawi and Mozambique, abolished school fees and brought millions of new primary students into the classrooms (see *Africa Renewal*, January 2010).

Years of awareness raising and campaigning have contributed to a decline (by 25 per cent since the mid-1990s) in the annual number of new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa. The share of HIV-positive women receiving treatment for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV increased fivefold to 45 per cent between 2004 and 2008. Some progress was recorded in child health. Since 2005, Rwanda decreased its rate of deaths among children under five by over 30 per cent, although sub-Saharan Africa as a whole still accounts for half of such deaths worldwide. Between 1990 and 2004, the report adds, the region achieved one of the largest reductions in deaths from measles worldwide.

Although there has been limited progress in the fight against hunger and gender inequality, some countries have had more positive results. From 2001 to 2007, Nigeria doubled food production. In Ghana the number of people who suffer from undernourishment fell by 74 per cent between 1991 and 2004. In 2008, Rwanda elected a majority of women (56 per cent) to its lower chamber of parliament.

Yet five years before the 2015 deadline for the MDGs, the report notes little progress by most African countries on other equally important targets. Overall, poverty and hunger are on the rise, unemployment and gender inequality remain daunting challenges and too many women lose their lives while giving birth. From 1990 to 2005, extreme poverty went up in Africa, affecting an additional 36 million people.

The global recession has had a negative impact on labour markets all over the world, and more people are unemployed in Africa as well. While they represent an increasing proportion in the labour force, women often receive lower wages than men. Their access to reproductive health services remains poor. With 123 births per 1,000 teenage girls, the adolescent birth rate in sub-Saharan Africa is the highest in the world.

Looking at the successes and the shortcomings, the Secretary-General cites three main hurdles to achieving the MDGs: unmet commitment, inadequate resources and lack of focus and accountability.

"Large gaps remain in commitments of official development assistance (ODA)," writes the Secretary-General. In July 2005, at its summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, the Group of Eight industrial countries pledged to contribute to Africa's development efforts by disbursing $63 bn annually by 2010. But to reach the target, the report says, aid to the continent would need to increase by $20 bn this year, a figure that is unlikely to be reached.

Not meeting the internationally agreed goals "would be an unacceptable failure, moral and practical," argues Mr. Ban. "If we fail, the dangers in the world — instability, violence, epidemics, diseases, environmental degradation, runaway population growth — will all be multiplied." ■

Africa's displaced people: out of the shadows

African Union convention breaks new ground, but challenges await

Andre-Michel Essoungou

It was a departure they never had time to prepare for. Seeking to escape death — sometimes amidst fighting between the Senegalese army and rebels in the southern region of Casamance — thousands fled their homes and abandoned livestock and property. Over the past two decades many have resettled in successive waves in Ziguinchor, a major city in Casamance.

Since then returning home has been an elusive dream. "We want to, but we fear we might get killed," Gabriel Landar, an elder who fled after his village was attacked in 1991, told a Radio France Internationale reporter in December. Up to now their lives have gotten no better, he complained. "We have no jobs, nothing to do and we rely on others for our basic needs. We cannot even go out there to look for firewood. We are afraid."

Mr. Landar and thousands of others forced out of their homes while remaining in their countries are known as internally displaced persons (IDPs). They are the forgotten victims of a protracted low-intensity conflict. Fear, loss, need and a disporting feeling of being in exile in their own land have been their lot for nearly two decades.

But these people are hardly the only ones living through such an ordeal. Across Africa nearly 12 million persons (almost half the world's IDP population) share the same plight, according to estimates by the United Nations and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the leading independent body on the issue, which works closely with the UN.*

There are fundamental differences between IDPs, whose displacement takes place within the borders of their country, and refugees, who seek shelter in another country. Africa is home to around 3 million refugees protected under international laws by the 1951 UN Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Under the Geneva Convention the international community is obliged to protect and assist refugees, including with shelter, food and medical help. The UN has a central institution dedicated to carrying out that comprehensive mandate, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Unlike refugees, IDPs do not enjoy the same support, be it legal or institutional. Instead a highly influential but not-legally-binding set of principles (known as the guiding principles) serves as the main international instrument for their protection. Although these principles specify the standards (largely similar to those for refugees) for the best response to the needs of displaced people, no institution is required to implement them. The primary responsibility for the protection of IDPs falls to their own government.

However, many states lack the capacity or resources, and sometimes the political will, to assist IDPs adequately. As IDPs struggle with difficult living conditions, they are often inefficiently supported by an array of agencies and actors. Some remain unassisted for extended periods and are marginalized and vulnerable to human rights violations.

Their suffering is precisely what drove 17 African countries to sign the African Union (AU) Convention on IDPs — also known as the Kampala Convention, after the capital of Uganda where the treaty was signed on 23 October 2009. If ratified, the convention will fill this void in international humanitarian law for Africa's IDPs.

The Kampala Convention is an "historic agreement aimed at protecting and assisting our brothers and sisters, the internally displaced," President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda told the press on signature day.

'A beacon of hope'

By agreeing to the first legally binding continental treaty on IDPs, African leaders have taken a bold step in dealing with what former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan once described as "one of the great

* Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2008*, April 2009.

tragedies of our time."

Potentially, the document has far-reaching political implications. Governments that sign it agree to shoulder primary responsibility for preventing forced displacement, among other things by threatening prosecution of those responsible, including non-state actors such as insurgent and rebel groups, private military contractors and multinational corporations. It also obliges governments to assist IDPs and facilitate their resettlement after they have been forced to move.

Under the convention, both governments and armed groups are required to protect and assist IDPs without any discrimination in areas under their effective control, to assist local communities that host IDPs and to facilitate humanitarian organizations' access to the displaced and delivery of relief supplies.

Additionally, the treaty obliges governments to provide compensation for the harm suffered by persons as a result of their displacement. It calls for cooperation among governments, international organizations, humanitarian agencies and civil society organizations to protect IDPs.

According to Julia Joiner, the AU commissioner for political affairs, "This instrument clearly demonstrates that African leaders are conscious of the difficulties that displaced persons experience and are poised to do as much as possible to put an end to their suffering."

Walter Kälin, the UN Secretary-General's representative on IDPs, likened the Kampala Convention to "a beacon of hope for 12 million Africans." In an interview with *Africa Renewal*, Mr. Kälin underlines the fact that compared to the UN-supported guiding principles on IDPs, the AU treaty clarifies the responsibilities of governments and other actors. Mr. Kälin notes, however, that "we still have a long way to go until it has an impact on the ground."

'Tragic crisis'

As a result of protracted conflicts, massive human rights violations and natural disasters, internal displacement has reached daunting proportions in Africa. "Between 1969 and 1994 ... the number of internally displaced persons soared, to between 10 million and 25 million," writes Francis Deng, the first representative of the UN Secretary-General on IDPs, in a widely praised book co-authored with Roberta Cohen, a former scholar at the Brookings Institute in Washington, D.C.** Such an alarming increase, the authors add, prompted the Organization of African Unity, which was superseded by the African Union in 2002, to affirm in 1994 that internal displacement is "one of the most tragic humanitarian and human rights crises in Africa today."

Since the mid-1990s the many wars in the Great Lakes region (Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda), West Africa (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire) and the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia) have forced millions of people to flee their homes, pushing some abroad but also displacing many within their own borders.

In recent years, as the number of conflicts have declined, more IDPs have returned home. In Uganda, more than half of the 1.8 million IDPs recorded in 2005 had gone home by December 2009. In Burundi the number went from 800,000 in 1999 to 100,000 at the end of 2009. According to the IDMC, the number of IDPs currently recorded in Africa is the lowest in a decade.

Yet over the past two years, three out of five of the world's largest internal displacement situations have still been in Africa. With 4.9 million displaced, Sudan has the largest reported IDP population, victims of the conflict in the Darfur region and the instability in Southern Sudan. An estimated 2 million people are IDPs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and some 1.3 million have been forced to flee their homes in Somalia. In total, 19 African countries confront problems of forced displacement resulting from conflict, generalized violence and human rights abuses.

Some African countries confront problems of forced displacement resulting from conflict, generalized violence and human rights abuses.

"Internally displaced communities in African countries faced myriad risks, due to immediate threats to their safety in some cases, and long-term neglect in others," notes the IDMC report. Rape and sexual violence against women and girls, and the forced recruitment of children into armed groups, are particularly insidious and widespread, adds the centre.

Both the international community and African governments have gener-

see page 21

** Roberta Cohen and Francis Deng, *Masses in Flight: the Global Crisis of Internal Displacement*, Washington: The Brookings Institute, 1998.

Even with peace, Liberia's women struggle

A conversation with activist Leymah Gbowee

By **Michael Fleshman**

Four years after voters in Liberia, battered by decades of dictatorship, economic ruin and civil war, elected a no-nonsense former banker and UN official, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, as their president, the country is making slow progress towards recovery. But there is still a long way to go.

Thousands of UN peacekeepers and police remain in the country to provide security and train a new army and police force. Poverty and unemployment are high among youth and the country's 100,000 demobilized former fighters, fuelling concerns about stability. Government facilities and services, including health, education and administration, were largely destroyed in the fighting. Average income, while rising, is among the lowest in the world. In 2009 the typical Liberian struggled to live on the equivalent of just US$0.38 per day, according to International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates.

It would be a daunting agenda for any president. But the stakes are particularly high for Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf, the first woman to be elected an African head of state — and for the millions of women across the continent who see her success or failure as their own.

Liberian peace activist Leymah Gbowee, who currently heads the West African regional Women Peace and Security Network–Africa, also sees President Johnson-Sirleaf as a trailblazer for African women more generally. Despite the many problems that faced Liberia on inauguration day in January 2006, Ms. Gbowee gives the president generally high marks for her leadership.

The fragile peace that followed the 2003 removal of former President Charles Taylor has held. The country's shattered economy is sputtering back to life as displaced people have returned to their farms and businesses and commerce has restarted. Schools, clinics and government offices have reopened, damaged infrastructure is under repair and the government is seeking to reform state institutions, speed economic recovery and promote national reconciliation with the help of the United Nations and Liberia's development partners.

Broadening horizons

At first, Ms. Gbowee told *Africa Renewal*, Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf's appeal was simply that she was not one of the men responsible for the war. "It was out of desperation. It is not that people had this belief in women. It was a feeling that 'We've tried the men from top to bottom. Now let's try something else'."

But since then, explains Ms. Gbowee, the president has attracted support because of her conduct in office. "I have grown to respect her ability to stand up in the face of immense criticism and try to do right for her country."

That is high praise from a founder and organizer of the grassroots Liberian women's peace movement. At the height of the fighting, Ms. Gbowee helped unite and mobilize thousands of Liberian women to protest the 14-year civil conflict and advocate for reconciliation. Excluded from internationally-sponsored peace negotiations, the women nevertheless found ways to pressure the leaders of the warring factions and are widely credited with keeping the talks from collapsing. Those efforts were later chronicled in the award-winning documentary film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*.*

Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf's presidency has opened new possibilities for Liberian women and girls, Ms. Gbowee notes. "Take small-scale market women," she says. "In the past they only aspired to maybe go to Ghana to do some cross-border trading. Now they are taking loans from the bank and going to China and other places to buy their goods." The fact that a woman could be president, she says, has broadened their horizons.

Even her own nine-year-old daughter was inspired to challenge traditional gen-

* For more information about the documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* visit the website <www.praythedevilbacktohell.com/v3>.

der roles. Ms. Gbowee says, smiling. "Six months after Ellen's election, the elementary school where she went had an election [for class officers]. The children went out and did their campaigning and they got elected. They had 12 elementary classes and so you had 12 presidents — and 11 of them were girls!

"This was the most amazing thing for me. When I was growing up girls aspired to be the chaplain or the treasurer of the class. You really didn't see them stepping up to say, 'I want to be president.' But immediately after the election of this woman, you had all these little girls saying, 'If Ellen can be president, I want to be another Ellen'."

School enrolment surging

Since Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf's inauguration, Ms. Gbowee explains, "You have high enrolment rates of girls in school now." It is a claim borne out by the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Its most recent study of progress towards gender parity in education found that the ratio of girls to every 100 boys in Liberian primary schools rose from 74 in 1999 to 94 in 2007.

"You also have high enrolment rates of women in adult literacy programmes," Ms. Gbowee continues. "Most of them tell you, 'By the end of this presidency in two or three years, I want to be able to write when I go to the bank and not use my thumbprint.' So there is just this whole wave of things that women want to do. Some of these girls who never really thought about high school are now saying, 'I want to go to college and be somebody'."

Even in the rural areas, where tradition and poverty often combine to keep girls from school, she explains, there is a new assertiveness and self-confidence. "We've done leadership projects with girls in three rural regions. In two of those regions the results were fantastic. The girls who completed high school were looking for scholarships or going back to relatives and saying, 'I have to go to university'."

Progress and problems

Whether Liberia's shattered education system will be able to accommodate the new aspirations, however, is an open question. There has been progress. School fees were abolished in 2006, spurring an 82 per cent increase in primary school enrolments in just two years. Spending on education reached 8.6 per cent of the budget in 2008, second only to health as the single largest budget line.

But according to a recent report on progress towards the internationally accepted Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which include universal primary school enrolment by 2015, fewer than 40 per cent of Liberia's children were enrolled at the level appropriate to their age in 2007. (If older students enrolled in lower levels are counted, the overall enrolment rate is about 86 per cent). It is unlikely that the country will reach full primary school enrolment by the 2015 target date.

That is partly a legacy of the fighting. The government reports that more than 70 per cent of the nation's schools were damaged or destroyed during the conflict and that hundreds of thousands of students were displaced. The country's dire financial circumstances are also slowing progress, as are the limits on government borrowing and spending that are part of an agreement with the IMF. As the economy improves, the government noted in its most recent MDG progress report, "the binding fiscal constraints that frame the [IMF] programme will need to be relaxed to facilitate increased production and access to basic socio-economic services."

Liberia does have a good chance of achieving equal primary school enrolment between boys and girls by 2015, another MDG goal, because of the increase in female attendance and the adoption of girls' education as a national priority by the government in 2006.

Violent backlash

There are also signs of a violent backlash by some Liberian men, Ms. Gbowee asserts. "Initially there was a feeling among some of them that 'The men have failed, lets give it to the women.' But now you get 'You people have had it for four years. OK'."

The country's continuing high rates of rape and sexual assault, she says, partly reflect that change in attitude. "We believe strongly that these are some of the backlashes for women getting overly empowered and really stepping out to do things they never really ventured to do. So yes,

see page 21

Africa defends democratic rule

"Zero tolerance" for coups, constitutional violations

Ernest Harsch

Not long ago, Africa's coup makers and autocrats felt confident they could get a pass "from their fellow rulers elsewhere on the continent. In recent months, however, as military officers and authoritarian presidents from Guinea to Niger and Madagascar are discovering, Africa is saying "no" — and starting to mean it.

In early February — as the crisis in Guinea finally seemed on the verge of a peaceful resolution, but yet another coup was looming in Niger — African leaders decided to step up the pressure. In a resolution on the prevention of "unconstitutional changes of government," a 1-4 February summit of the African Union (AU) proclaimed a policy of "zero tolerance" for military coups and other violations of democratic standards.

That stance is notable. For decades, most African countries were ruled by military or one-party regimes. In response to popular agitation, much of the continent shifted to multi-party systems in the 1990s, and coups became less common. Yet many of Africa's newly elected leaders were still reluctant to criticize their less democratic peers.

Guinea's junta leader Captain Camara (left) agrees to meet new African Union envoy Ibrahim Gambari (center) to discuss ways to help support the transition to civilian rule, as Guinea's foreign minister looks on.

'Respect constitutions'

Now that is changing, as the AU and other African regional organizations move more systematically and firmly to uphold democratic values. The process has taken a decade to unfold. The AU's predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), first decided to reject military coups in 1999. When the OAU transformed itself into the AU in 2002, the new organization's founding Constitutive Act included among its principles "condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of government." Yet at the outset the AU focused much of its practical work on Africa's many armed conflicts, and developing ways to enforce its various democratic principles took time.

"Today the norm is that people should respect constitutions," the UN special representative on West Africa, Said Djinnit, told *Africa Renewal*. "Whoever makes a move that is unconstitutional should be condemned. And not only condemned, but subject to sanctions." (See interview, page 13.)

"Africa has engaged genuinely on the path of democracy," asserts Mr. Djinnit, who was a key figure in the transformation of the OAU into the AU before joining the UN in 2008. But he also acknowledges that progress along that road has not been easy or straightforward. Parliaments, political parties, court systems, civil society organizations and other institutions that could defend democratic practices remain weak.

For their part, Africa's continental and regional bodies are also struggling with the question of how to uphold the principles of democracy. The recent upheavals in Guinea, Niger and Madagascar highlight the challenges.

Opening in Guinea?

In December 2008, just a day after the death of Guinea's longtime strongman Lansana Conté, the army took power. Both the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) promptly condemned the coup and suspended Guinea from their activities. Domestically, however, the initial reactions were less negative, since the new president, Captain Dadis Camara, promised a democratic transition.

But as months passed, it became evident that the officers were settling into power. Opposition parties responded with street protests.

The situation turned tragic in September 2009 when soldiers, many from the presidential guard, attacked a large opposition rally. The massacre cost more than 150 lives.

Facing domestic revulsion and strong outside condemnation, the junta experienced rifts. Captain Camara was shot and seriously wounded by his aide de camp in December. With Mr. Camara out of the country for medical treatment and his aide in hiding, the junta's de facto leadership shifted to General Sekouba Konate. The general, who had not been in Guinea during the massacre, took a conciliatory stance.

On 15 January there was a breakthrough. Captain Camara and General Konate signed an agreement in which

the captain promised to remain abroad. General Konate pledged to consult Guinea's parties, unions and civil society groups to prepare a democratic transition.

Jean-Marie Doré, a long-time opposition leader, became prime minister. The presidency of the National Transition Council, responsible for drawing up a new constitution and electoral guidelines, went to Rabiatou Serah Diallo, head of the largest union federation and a woman with a clear record of opposing repressive rule.

"Things have happened so fast," Sydia Touré, another opposition leader, marveled to reporters. He credited outside support for encouraging the process. "The pressure from the international community was very strong, and very fast. The horizon was closed very quickly."

So that pressure is kept up, Guinea will remain suspended from the AU until democracy is restored, says AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Ramtane Lamamra. "One has to be careful not to rush to lifting sanctions."

ECOWAS, at a summit meeting on 16 February, also weighed how to best support Guinea's still-fragile democratic transition — including how to press the country's armed forces to restructure. As Mr. Djinnit told *Africa Renewal* earlier: "If you do not reform the army, you will not be able to find a peaceful solution."

Niger: from one coup to another

The evolution of Niger's crisis was different from that of Guinea's. In Niger, the initial turn to unconstitutional rule came from *within* an elected civilian regime. President Mamadou Tandja was first elected in 1999, and then reelected in 2004, providing a decade of relative stability after years of coups and turbulence.

According to Niger's constitution, the president could serve a maximum of two five-year terms. So Mr. Tandja should have stepped down when his second term expired in November 2009. But early that year he claimed that he needed a three-year extension, prompting an outcry from the opposition. The Constitutional Court ruled that any change in the presidential term limit would be illegal.

Mr. Tandja reacted by arbitrarily dissolving the court and the National Assembly. Regarding this as a coup, the opposition, trade unions and civil society groups organized large demonstrations and strikes. The AU expressed concern and ECOWAS warned of possible economic sanctions.

But Mr. Tandja pushed ahead, arresting many critics. With much opposition suppressed, a referendum approved his new constitution, extending his term by three years, allowing him to run for yet another term and further expanding executive powers. In October ECOWAS suspended Niger; the AU demanded a return to the previous constitutional order and several key donors cut financial aid.

Amidst a tense stalemate, military units detained Mr. Tandja and most of his cabinet and assumed power on 18 February. They called their junta the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSRD, by its French initials) and named Squad Leader Salou Djibo president.

Welcoming the military move as a possible way out of Niger's logjam, thousands of citizens hit the streets to express their support for the new authorities. ECOWAS and the AU condemned the coup on principle. But together with the UN, they also promptly sent a joint delegation to Niger under the leadership of Mr. Djinnit to press the officers to follow through on their pledges to restore democracy.

Within just a few days the CSRD had appointed a civilian prime minister and had begun consultations on a new constitution and preparations for elections. According to Mohamed Bazoum, an opposition party spokesman, "Our soldiers know the era of military regimes is over. There is always the risk they will try to stay in power, but we think the risk is minimal."

Seeking to reassure the sceptics, President Djibo signed into law a ban on any member of his junta or the transitional government running in an upcoming election. "The era of autocratic regimes," he said, "is well and truly over in this country, which has no other wish but to be democratic."

After Niger's former president tried to change the rule governing a term limit, provoking a crippling crisis, the military took power in February with promises to restore democracy and carry out elections.

Impasse in Madagascar

The crisis in Africa's island nation of Madagascar has persisted since early 2009, with repeated rounds of negotiations but, as of this writing, no clear resolution. It began when popular dissatisfaction with the elected government of President Marc Ravalomanana led to large street demonstrations. In the capital, Antananarivo, these were led by Mayor Andry Rajoelina, a rival of the president. Both sides called on the army to restore order. In March the military decided to back Mr. Rajoelina and the president fled the country.

Most major donor nations refused to

recognize Mr. Rajoelina's administration. The AU regarded the former president's removal as unconstitutional and suspended Madagascar's membership. So did the regional Southern African Development Community (SADC).

In coordination with the AU, SADC took the lead in seeking to broker an agreement. An initial deal was signed in Maputo, Mozambique, in August in which the parties to Mr. Rajoelina, Mr. Ravalomanana and two other former presidents agreed to establish a transitional government until new elections.

However disagreements over the allocation of posts stalled further progress. Then in December Mr. Rajoelina unilaterally dismissed the agreed upon prime minister and replaced him with an army colonel.

The AU summit in February condemned "the illegal regime" and expressed its continued support for SADC's efforts.

Madagascar's ousted president Marc Ravalomanana (left) is replaced by Andry Rajoelina. The African Union has imposed sanctions against the latter's government for being unconstitutional and illegitimate.

The following month the AU Peace and Security Council imposed travel sanctions against Mr. Rajoelina and other members of his government.

'Unfinished business'

As unconstitutional changes of government, the cases of Guinea, Niger and Madagascar seem relatively straightforward: either soldiers took over or changed a regime, or a president arbitrarily scrapped a constitution in defiance of existing institutions. But there are other cases in which violations of constitutional norms have been less clear or ruling parties were accused of using repression or fraud to influence elections, as in Gabon, Togo and Zimbabwe. In such cases, other African leaders have not always agreed on how to respond.

Getting African governments and their institutions to fully and consistently promote democratic norms and practices remains "unfinished business," acknowledges Mr. Djinnit. He recalls that the former OAU Secretariat proposed a resolution in 2000 to condemn military coups, as well as coups "from within," in which rulers undermine their own constitutions. At the time, only the former was accepted.

One common target of constitutional manipulation has been the presidential term limit. According to H. Kwasi Prempeh, a Ghanaian expert in constitutional law, the adoption of such limits was an important gain for Africa's pro-democracy movements, designed to prevent incumbents from using their power and wealth to manipulate elections and s in office indefinitely. By 2005, 33 Afri constitutions contained provisions limit the number of presidential terms.

Some leaders tried to modify th limits but were defeated by inte domestic opposition. Some succeed however, including in Chad, Camero and the Congo Republic. Yet others positive examples by stepping do when their terms expired, as in Gha Mali and Mozambique.

In 2007, an AU summit approv a new African Charter on Democra Elections and Governance. Once it co into force it will shift Africa further in direction of "the universal values principles of democracy and respect human rights," the charter's first ba objective. Among other provisions recognizes "the supremacy of the con tution" and stipulates that any revisi of constitutions be based on "natio consensus." It also prohibits any "per trators" of unconstitutional changes fr participating in subsequent elections even warns that coup makers may tried before an African court.

So far 29 African governments ha signed the charter. But only three (Ethio Mauritania and Sierra Leone) have r tified it, notably short of the 15 ratificati needed to bring it into force. The AU su mit in February appealed to all member sign and ratify the charter "without dela

A number of African pro-dem racy activists and commentators ha expressed scepticism about the ability the continent's official organizations push forward on their own, noting that gains so far have taken considerable po lar mobilization.

Given the number of sitting le ers in Africa who have violated ba democratic norms, commented Ada Ouedraogo Damiss in *L'Observateur Paalga*, an independent daily in Burk Faso, "One can legitimately ask whet the AU is really able to face up to t repeated problem of constitutio fiddling." In West Africa, remark Senegalese economist Mamadou Ndio a democratic revolution will not lik come from official bodies like ECOW "It must come from the people."

'Stability is based on democracy'

Interview with Said Djinnit, UN representative on West Africa

Said Djinnit has been the UN Secretary-General's special representative and head of the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) since February 2008. He brings to his position a long record of promoting democracy and seeking to resolve armed conflicts in Africa. Mr. Djinnit, a seasoned Algerian diplomat, first joined the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1989, as director of the secretary-general's cabinet. In that capacity he played a key role in shaping the body's work on peace and security, democracy and human rights and in establishing the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. In 1999 he was elected the OAU's assistant secretary-general for political affairs, participating in the elaboration of the organization's declaration on "unconstitutional changes of government" and heading the task force that drafted the Constitutive Act of the new African Union (AU). With the transformation of the OAU into the AU in 2002, he became commissioner for peace, security and political affairs, a post he held until joining the UN. Now based at UNOWA's offices in Dakar, Senegal, Mr. Djinnit visited UN headquarters in New York in January for the Secretary-General's presentation of a report on the work of his office. During that visit, he shared with *Africa Renewal* his thoughts on Africa's efforts to manage its political turbulence.

The Secretary-General's January report on the work of your UN Office for West Africa refers to a worrying increase in unconstitutional changes in power in the region, including in Guinea and Niger. The African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have both condemned those moves, although not too long ago it was less common to hear such criticisms from African leaders. Do you see progress in the way African governments are coming to grips with these kinds of undemocratic changes in neighbouring countries?

What I consider huge progress in Africa is the fact that today the norm is that people should respect constitutions, and that whoever makes a move that is unconstitutional should be condemned. And not only condemned, but subject to sanctions. That's big progress.

Africa made very speedy progress between 1999 and 2002. Every year, something happened. It involved a combination of forces, African people, civil society and leadership. It started at the Algiers summit [of the Organization of African Unity] in 1999, when for the first time the leaders formally said that we should not accept this phenomenon of the coup d'état anymore. One year later, at the summit in Togo, the OAU Secretariat proposed a draft document which was adopted as the Lome Declaration. It set out how we should respond to unconstitutional changes in government. From there, we took it higher and higher. The peak was the launching of the African Union in Durban in 2002.

So from 1999 to 2002 there was very speedy progress in putting in place institutions, norms and values to bring together countries not just because they are united geographically, as one continent, but because they share common values.

What we are seeing now [with the recent unconstitutional changes] is a kind of setback, a sliding back. Why? Because institutions are not strong enough to sustain that progress. It's like when you put up a new building. If you haven't consolidated the first phase, it's difficult to go forward with the second level of your building. The institutions are not strong enough to sustain that. Africa has engaged, genuinely, on the path of democracy, based on multi-party systems. That is now the norm in West Africa, basically. It's just that the actors, the institutions involved are not strong.

The African Union has said that military coups cannot stand. But when Dadis Camara carried out his coup in Guinea in 2008, not all African governments condemned it. Some in the region suggested giving him time, to see how it goes. That didn't turn out well, as we saw with the massacre of September 2009.

But formally, Africa's institutions condemned the coup. ECOWAS condemned it, the African Union condemned it. And Guinea has been under sanctions until now. All countries have agreed on these norms and values. But their national institutions at home are not strong enough to prevent coups.

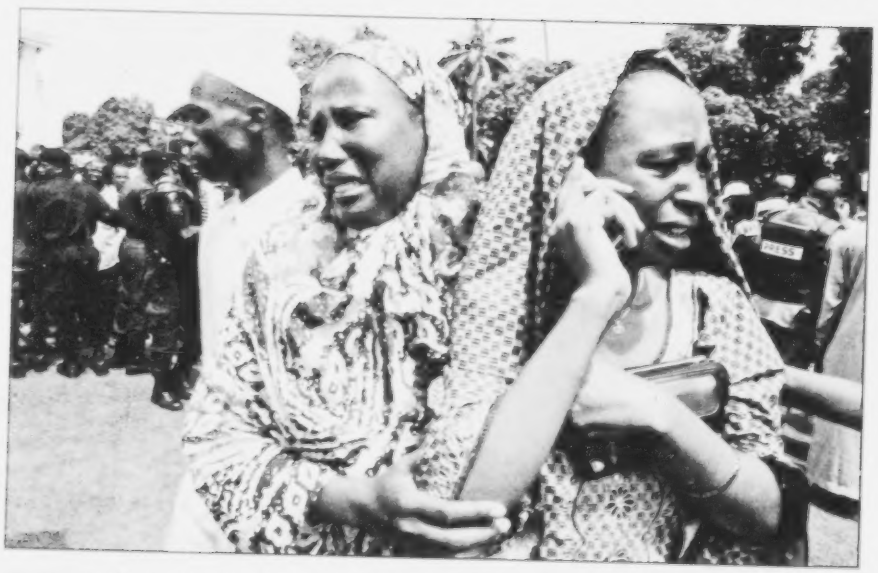
Take Niger. It has agreed to these norms and values. Because of the background of Niger — with very violent coups and counter-coups before 1999, but then stability after that — the government of Niger was one of those that pushed strongly for this new set of democratic values. But the institutions there were not able to prevent what happened subsequently in the country. Yet ECOWAS has still condemned that, and Niger is under ECOWAS sanctions.

In 2008 there was a military coup in Mauritania, and the AU and ECOWAS both condemned it. But a year later, the same general who led the coup organized elections, in which he won the presidency. Since most African and other foreign observers judged that the elections were transparent, he gained international recognition. Doesn't that send a signal that if a coup maker can just hold on and go through a process of elections, he'll be OK?

You know, the mistake that can be done is to consider that since we have this rule,

it will apply automatically, everywhere and every time. I remember when the African Union put forward the programme of NEPAD, with very far-reaching principles, and everybody in the West was very happy because this new thinking is close to European values, it's very liberal. But then they said, hey, now we have to handle the case of Zimbabwe. It's not because you said you're willing to address the issues of governance, that you are ready to face the first challenge the next day. It's like you want to go to the gym to be fit. And the next day they give you 30 kilos and say carry these 30 kilos. But I just started doing gym. Give me some time to build my capacity so I can carry 5 kilos, and then 6 and 7. Then hopefully I will come to your 30 kilos.

Secondly, we tried to put forward the principle that whoever has made a coup should not be able to stand for election. We tried. I know this question very well.



Women in Africa campaigning for the right to vote and actively participating in elections in Guinea. Out of the 24 countries in sub-Saharan Africa that held elections in 2009, 13 had women candidates for presidency.

When I was assistant secretary-general of political affairs of the OAU, we had a meeting of the Central Organ — it was like the Peace and Security Council established after 2003 in the African Union, but not as effective — and we adopted a resolution in which we stated that whoever is responsible for a coup d'etat should not stand for election. But that was just a resolution, and it was never included in the [summit] document of 2000. So we have no legal basis to prevent anyone from standing in an election.

In Guinea, it's only outsid political considerations that we are saying that Dadis Camara cannot stand. We have no legal basis to stop anybody from standing. But we do have moral and political reasons, whenever we can. The political appreciation could differ from one situation to another. You could have a different appreciation of the situation in Mauritania and of the situation in Guinea. In Mauritania, if he takes it through clean elections that are open, transparent, under the supervision of international observers, who are we to stop him?

With a political transition now under way in Guinea, there have also been discussions about initiating reform of its army and other security institutions. But elsewhere in Africa it seems that the most serious security sector reform (SSR) programmes have been in countries emerging out of war, where peacekeeping missions can help push it along. In a country like Guinea, how do you build up the political momentum for security sector reform?

Actually, in the case of Guinea it will be easier. This is a country which has not gone through an open conflict and a peacekeeping process, but it has gone through serious tensions and incidents of violence. Everybody, including the junta leadership, fully recognizes that the key problem in Guinea is the army and that the defence institutions need to be reorganized and reformed. They are saying that if you do not reform the army, you will not be able to find a peaceful solution. Not the other way around, to have a peace agreement and then undertake an SSR exercise. So there is a consensus, internationally and nationally, of the need for SSR.

Guinea seems to be a very clear case, an outright military coup followed by serious repression. In Niger there was an open rift between the president on the one hand and the Constitutional Court and the National Assembly on the other. But there are other cases that are grayer. In some countries there are dominant ruling parties that have amended the constitution to change or eliminate presidential term limits, to allow the incumbent to stay in power. Is that something that can be addressed?

It's all unfinished business. In 2000 the OAU Secretariat proposed a declaration to be adopted by the summit on how to respond to unconstitutional changes of government. Our document had two pillars. The first pillar was the reaction to a coup by a soldier who comes from outside, removes whoever is there and says, "I'm in charge." The other coup was the one done from within, by undermining the constitution, blocking institutions from allowing for democratic life. Unfortunately, that aspect of the document was not accepted in 2000 at the Lomé summit.

So at the Secretariat we said, OK, let's build on our one pillar. With member states, you need to build confidence. You cannot ask them for everything. They will not accept it. They need to be reassured that they can cope. Unfortunately, that work was not pursued after 2003. For the AU, the legal ground is limited. But ECOWAS has some legal ground. The Protocol on Governance of ECOWAS condemns any review of a constitution

which is not done consensually. That was the case in Niger. So this is work in progress. We are in a spirit of testing the new values to move further.

The AU, ECOWAS and other African institutions are all for democracy. But in some countries there remain serious threats to peace and stability. Some have argued that in such cases restoring or maintaining peace should take precedence, that if you have war, then little else is possible. Is there validity to that view?

Absolutely. Africa is struggling with a series of dilemmas. It wants peace. It wants development. It wants peace. It wants democracy. It wants peace. It wants justice. Sometimes, these principles could contradict each other. If at any time there is a choice to be made, Africa will always choose first and foremost peace. Peace and stability will always prevail over other things. Not because they don't like the other things. But they have no option. Every African wants to have something to eat. But to have something to eat, you have to be assured that you can survive and live. If you give me development but you take my life, what is there?

But once peace has been restored, what are the next priorities: political stability, economic recovery, social reform? Are they distinct tasks, or do they go together?

It's always related. It is difficult to say that you should do this before you do that. But doing that without doing this will not be easy either. It will be very difficult one day to conduct reforms, and then the next day you have a coup. Propitious political conditions will help address the real problems of economic development, and this is the biggest challenge after having restored peace. At the African Union, we invested much in preventing conflicts, which is very difficult, or in managing them. At least Africa, for a change, is being seen as addressing its own problems.

But be careful. The biggest problem is not only peace. It is governance — political *and* economic governance. For putting into place institutions for economic governance, you need stability, not necessarily democracies. Even in undemocratic countries, as long as stability is there, they can do business. But stability is also related to democracy. Stability, long-lasting stability, is based on democracy.

One of the key reforms that many people highlight is women's empowerment. In some countries, like Liberia, we have seen enormous advances at the political level. But progress on social issues seems more difficult. What do you think of this issue?

There is a general problem of empowering the people of Africa, giving a chance to the people of Africa to make a difference, including women. Women have been purposely marginalized. Others have been marginalized, but women have been further marginalized. So it's a general problem of empowering, of giving a chance to the people to improve their lives.

Initially, after independence, the thinking in Africa was that the state is there to do everything. But that is over. The people have understood that there is a limit to what the state can do; that real transformation can be made only by the people.

Women have been imprisoned in their countries. They are a huge reservoir of talent and imagination, and a force for peace. So releasing the energies of women in Africa will be a big part of the process of social enhancement and improvement.

The report on ECOWAS's work in West Africa highlights other emerging problems, such as drug trafficking, terrorism and so on. Doesn't dealing with these issues in the long term come back to addressing the same root causes that have been identified as fueling conflict, such as youth unemployment and social injustice?

Absolutely. It goes inevitably to the root causes of the problem. You mentioned them: poverty, and then governance. The little resources we have are not properly managed and governed. The real challenge to peace and stability is governance, political and economic governance, so that the people feel that the power is fairly shared and that the resources are also fairly shared. ■

A 'crisis in waiting' for AIDS patients

Trade rules will make it harder to get cheap generic medicines

Michael Fleshman

Seven years after an agreement at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to allow developing countries to import inexpensive copies of costly patented medicines, the compromise has failed to deliver on its promise as a pharmaceutical lifeline for the global poor.

Since the 2003 compromise was reached, just a single shipment of anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs)—the only effective treatment for HIV infection—has been delivered under its terms.

With upwards of 35 million people expected to need ARV therapy by the year 2030, health experts warn that global patent rules are contributing to a looming "time bomb" as current drugs lose their effectiveness and then newer, patented replacements are priced out of reach of all but the wealthy.

Unless the system is fixed, analysts caution, the flow of affordable life-saving generic medicines to the world's poorest could slow to a trickle and millions of lives — most of them African — will be lost.

Higher costs on the horizon

The reason nearly 3 million Africans are now on ARV therapy is that the drugs are available for as little as $80 per patient per year, Emi Maclean, a treatment access officer for the non-governmental Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF), tells *Africa Renewal*. This compares with an annual cost of over $10,000 when the patented treatments were first developed. The price drop, she says, was caused by fierce competition from Indian generics manufacturers who were free to copy the drugs under Indian law.

But that is about to change. With Indian patent laws now compliant with the WTO's strict patent rules, she notes, it will be much harder to produce cheap generic versions of newer, more effective ARVs that are already standard in Europe and North America. Because of serious side effects with the specific combination of medicines now commonly used in Africa, Ms. Maclean argues that there is already an urgent need to switch to the European and North American version. But that version is "two to three times more expensive."

The problems will mount further as the HIV virus develops resistance to the drugs now being given. MSF treatment programmes in Africa report that about 15 per cent of their patients are already showing signs of drug resistance, Maclean explains. They will risk death unless they are moved to second-line treatments, which are 8-12 times more expensive than the current regimen in Africa. Even more advanced ARV treatments, which patients eventually will need, can cost 27 times more.

The UK's All Parliamentary Group on AIDS noted in July 2009 that the need for more expensive medicines makes it vital to keep drug costs low. But the group also observed that competition among generics manufacturers, "the most important factor in reducing prices" in the past, "is unlikely to be possible" because of global patent rules — creating a "treatment time bomb" in poor countries.

Finding a fix

The 2003 agreement, reached after nearly two years of hard negotiations at the WTO, was designed to create a loophole in the international rules governing medicine patents. These rules are known as Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, or TRIPS in WTO parlance. TRIPS grant patent holders a 20-year monopoly on their creations, but allows governments to override those protections under some circumstances through the issuance of a "compulsory licence" to a local manufacturer to make copies of patented products without the patent owner's permission.

Because TRIPS allowed countries to issue compulsory licences only for domestic use, however, countries without local drug-manufacturing industries, including 37 in Africa, were unable to use compulsory licences to keep medicines affordable.

The 2003 exemption allowed poor countries to import generic drugs made under compulsory licences in other WTO member states provided a number of steps were followed. These included advance notification by the importer of the type and quantity of drugs ordered, and mandatory changes in the shape, colour or packaging of the products to distinguish them from the patented versions.

Complex and cumbersome

Many non-governmental medical groups and anti-AIDS activists immediately criticized the agreement as unworkable.

They argued that the need for prior notification exposed the importing countries to political and economic pressure from donors, multinational drug companies and trading partners opposed to the use of compulsory licences. The adoption of an order-by-order approach, MSF said in a 2006 analysis, prevented generics suppliers from achieving economies of scale through mass production.

Mandeep Dhaliwal, head of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) HIV/AIDS Human Rights and Gender Division, echoed such concerns. "What's the point of having 'flexibilities' in the rules if they're too complicated to use?" she asks *Africa Renewal*. The question, she continues, is what to do about it. "Re-opening the agreement at the WTO may not be the strategic thing to do. We could end up with a worse agreement than we have now."

Temi Avafia, a UNDP specialist on intellectual property and AIDS, agrees. He notes that powerful commercial interests often exert great influence on their governments' positions at the WTO. The 2003 deal was "not an easy mechanism in the first place, but it is the mechanism we have."

Canada tests TRIPS

For this reason advocates are watching with keen interest Canada's efforts to make the TRIPS compromise effective. Canada was among only a handful of countries to amend its laws to allow local companies to export drugs under the 2003 accord. Dubbed the Jean Chretien Pledge to Africa after the then prime minister, the enabling legislation was passed in 2004 and became law the following year.

Canada is also the only country to actually ship an order of medicine under the agreement's terms, an order of ARVs from the Canadian generics company Apotex to the Rwandan government.

But according to Richard Elliott, executive director of the non-governmental Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, the process revealed flaws in Canada's legislation. "They started with an imperfect model at the WTO and made it less perfect. Canada can make its own legislation more workable."

The requirement that companies have a firm order before seeking a compulsory licence was one problem, Mr. Elliott says. This meant that governments had to place an order without knowing if the licence would be granted. Provisions that require new licences for each order, he notes, "are user-unfriendly. This is not how governments buy drugs. Nor is it how the pharmaceutical industry operates."

Licensing requirements, moreover, "need to be commercially viable and administratively straightforward," Mr. Elliott says. "At the moment countries are looking at the legislation and asking, 'Why should we jump through all these hoops?'"

Dr. Bruce Clark, the vice president of Apotex, told *Africa Renewal* that his company encountered many difficulties with the Canadian legislation. For example, Apotex's effort to obtain voluntary licences from the patent holders before applying for the compulsory licence, as required by Canadian law, lasted more than a year and was finally unsuccessful. On balance, Dr. Clark says, the steps needed to produce drugs for export under the law "are simply too difficult and complicated. As it is currently written, we will not use it again."

Legislation that Mr. Elliott and other advocates say would streamline the laws has been introduced in parliament and could be debated as early as mid-year.

Not everyone agrees that the legislation needs fixing. Russell Williams, president of Canada's Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies, an industry trade group, tells *Africa Renewal* that delays in filling Rwanda's order were unrelated to either WTO or Canadian rules. "The law has worked once. So we know it can work again," Mr. Williams argues, although Apotex's Dr. Clark disputes that claim.

With virtually all major drug-exporting countries now in compliance with TRIPS, the MSF's Ms. Maclean observes, making the 2003 exemption viable could be a matter of life and death for millions.

"We see a closing window of opportunity for drug access unless major changes are made," Ms. Maclean argues. "You really have a crisis in waiting — not just on HIV/AIDS, but for all the diseases whose medications are priced out of reach because of patent barriers.... The needs are tremendous, and there will be real human consequences if those needs are not met." ■

Africa's disabled will not be forgotten

People with disabilities fight for services, rights, dignity

Stanley Kwenda
Harare

Musimba Kuchera was born blind. He struggled through primary and secondary school and university to become an information specialist, and now works for the Students' Solidarity Trust, a non-governmental organization striving to protect students' rights.

Although he feels a sense of achievement in his own personal life, he remains saddened by the fact that many others in his situation will not be able to realize their dreams, or even go to school. "There are very few government schools that cater for children with disabilities. I wonder how many disabled people are in school right now," Mr. Kuchera asks.

Most schools that admit people with disabilities are funded by churches, Mr. Kuchera told *Africa Renewal*, while many disabled children in Zimbabwe simply do not go to school. "There is not much investment in this area. This constituency has not been taken seriously," he says.

Most of the obstacles facing people with disabilities involve public amenities, education and information. "Access to public transport, buildings and public gatherings is very difficult," says Mr. Kuchera. "The infrastructure is not user-friendly. I cannot operate an elevator on my own and there are no Braille guides. It's even worse for those using wheelchairs, because ramps do not exist in this part of the world."

Mr. Kuchera is a member of the National Disabled Council, an organization working for the rights of the disabled. He also belongs to the Southern African People's Solidarity Network, a coalition of civil society groups fighting for social and economic rights in Southern Africa. He decided to join these groups because they give him an opportunity to fight for the rights of people with disabilities in Zimbabwe and the region.

There are an estimated 1.4 million people living with disabilities in Zimbabwe, according to Progressio, an international charity working to eradicate poverty. The United Nations estimates that the total number of people with disabilities in Africa is approximately 80 million.

'Useless liabilities'?

In the streets of Harare hundreds of disabled people beg for alms. Most do so in dirty clothes, in makeshift wheelchairs or on crutches, while the less fortunate drag themselves on their hands and knees.

Most were previously cared for in special homes, including the Jairos Jiri Centre, Copota School, Danhiko and the Chinyaradzo Children's Home. Such institutions used to get financial support from the government and the corporate world, but the economic decline that began in Zimbabwe in 2000 made life in the homes difficult and forced most residents to opt for life on the streets.

"The government has forgotten the disabled people," laments Mr. Kuchera. "Nothing was mentioned in the country's 2010 budget. There are no projects or programmes whatsoever for disabled people."

Those with disabilities also seem to confront an uncaring society. When they approach members of the public for help in starting market gardening, dressmaking or music projects, they are regarded as a nuisance. The general feeling is that the only places for a disabled person are in the street or in front of a church, begging. The situation is worse in rural areas, where children with disabilities are usually confined to the house because of long-held traditional beliefs that they are curses from God.

"Society views disabled people as useless liabilities that have no role to play in society," says Gladys Charowa, a single mother who was left wheelchair-bound by a 2001 car accident. She is a founding member and executive director of the Disabled Women Support Organization, a group that focuses on helping women and girls with disabilities.

Discrimination and abuse

Because of the prevalent social attitudes towards people with disabilities, Ms Chirowa says, they often face discrimination. In Zimbabwe, women with disabilities experience especially severe discrimination.

A 2004 report by Save the Children Norway found that sexual abuse of children with disabilities is increasing in Zimbabwe, and that 87.4 per cent of girls with disabilities had been sexually abused. Approximately 48 per cent of these girls were mentally challenged, 15.7 per cent had hearing impairments and 25.3 per cent had visible physical disabilities. Of those who had been sexually abused, 52.4 per cent tested positive for HIV.

To make matters worse, access to counseling, testing and treatment is severely limited. Health personnel often display biased attitudes towards people with disabilities, while there is no information on HIV/AIDS in Braille and staff are unable to use sign language.

Fighting for enforcement

Although the Zimbabwean government is among many in Africa that have not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (see box), it has enacted some legislation to protect their rights. The Disabilities Act is intended to benefit those living with disabilities, while the constitution prohibits discrimination. But such laws exist largely on paper, and generally are not enforced.

A number of groups lobby the government to recognize the rights of the disabled and fight for the existing laws to be enforced. One such organization is Disabled People's International.

Joshua Malinga, who is wheelchair-bound, is a founding member. He has been a disability activist since 1980, travelling widely in that capacity and holding leadership positions in Zimbabwe, regionally and internationally. He has participated in and promoted research on the status of disabled people, and holds a master's degree in disability studies from the University of Cape Town, in neighbouring South Africa. He also belongs to the Political Bureau of Zimbabwe's ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front, led by President Robert Mugabe.

While Mr. Malinga himself wields some political influence, most people with disabilities do not. "The quality of life of disabled people in Africa is pathetic because disability has not been mainstreamed," Mr. Malinga told *Africa Renewal*. "Disabled people are not represented in parliaments, in organs of decision-making, even on issues that concern them. Governments do not plan with the disabled in mind."

Asked why he has failed to convince his party — which has been at the forefront of Zimbabwean politics for the past 30 years — to lift up the lives of the disabled, he said that he is trying. "both in parliament and in my party. That's why I have mixed my international advocacy work with politics. The tragedy is that as disabled people, we are very few in numbers and often find ourselves on the peripheries of political agendas."

In several Southern African countries there has been some progress, Mr. Malinga pointed out. In Namibia, all government ministries have been instructed to integrate disability issues into their work, while in South Africa the Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities takes up their concerns.

In Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare is responsible for the needs of the disabled. "We have a big responsibility as a government," says Paurina Mpariwa, the minister. She adds, however, that "at the moment we have serious financial problems that limit us from adequately addressing the needs of the disabled people. But we are aware of their situation."

Mr. Malinga insists, "We want disabled

UN defends rights of people with disabilities

Over 650 million people are estimated to be living with disabilities globally, of whom more than 500 million are in developing countries. To help protect their rights, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in December 2006. The convention and an additional optional protocol are intended to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities.

Article 3 of the convention establishes general principles for its implementation. Among them are respect for everyone's inherent dignity and the freedom to make their own choices, full participation in society, acceptance of people with disabilities as part of human diversity, access to transportation and information, and equal opportunity. It also cites the rights of people with disabilities, including:

- equality before the law
- life, liberty and security of the person
- freedom from torture, exploitation, violence and abuse
- freedom of movement and nationality
- respect for privacy
- access to education and health care
- work and an adequate standard of living, and
- participation in cultural, political and public life.

The convention does not explicitly define "disability." However, the preamble states that "disability is an evolving concept" that "results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers" that hinder their full, effective and equal participation in society.

Compliance with the convention is monitored internationally by a Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The committee reviews reports submitted by signatory governments and also has the authority to examine individual complaints and conduct inquiries in countries that have ratified the optional protocol.

Another legal instrument under the convention is the Conference of State Parties, which meets periodically to discuss the convention's implementation. The convention and its optional protocol are supported by a joint secretariat, consisting of staff from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs in New York and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva.

— Marian Aggrey

persons in all areas of life, from education, training and employment to physical access and health care. It also is intended to promote the creation of an environment that will advance the economic well-being of disabled people and enable them to function better.

After taking office in January 2009, President John Atta Mills initiated a series of face-to-face meetings with persons with disabilities. The discussions led to the establishment of the National Council of Persons with Disabilities.

The authorities also are seeking to disseminate the Disability Act of 2006 more widely, including in electronic form. In June 2009, for example, Minister of Education Alex Tetteh-Enyo launched the act's electronic version in Akropong in the Eastern Region. With funding from the Danish International Development Agency, the act was produced in English and local languages such as Ga, Ewe and Twi.

Most recently, the government has decided to incorporate disability issues into the country's national budget. Minister of Finance and Economic Planning Kwabena Duffour announced in parliament on 19 November 2009 that his government will give all children with disabilities free education. The government had previously established special schools for the disabled in all regions of the country.

"The political will has always existed in Ghana," commented Aida Sarr, a communications and programmes officer at the Secretariat of the Africa Decade of Persons with Disabilities, headquartered in neighbouring Togo.

But political will is sorely needed in most other African countries, despite the existence of an international convention, the proclamation of an annual International Day of Persons with Disabilities (on 3 December) and other programmes. People with disabilities still face discrimination and receive little support across much of Africa. ■

Displaced people

from page 7

ally been slow in devising solutions. Until the end of the Cold War, action in favour of IDPs was very limited. In 1992 the UN Secretary-General appointed Mr Deng, a former Sudanese foreign minister, as his first representative on IDPs. As the only senior UN official solely devoted to IDPs, he was instrumental in developing and publicizing legal mechanisms for their protection, including the guiding principles.

African responses to the needs of IDPs have come a long way, from an initial reluctance to a progressively stronger stand in recent years. In 2006, 11 Great Lakes countries adopted a protocol on IDPs, the first binding multilateral pact in the world focused on internal displacement. Before the Kampala Convention, some countries had set up or were in the process of setting up legal frameworks for IDPs' protection.

The Kampala Convention resulted from a complex three-year drafting process that involved national governments, non-governmental organizations and experts, including some from UN agencies and departments. To date, it represents the single most ambitious initiative for dealing with IDPs.

Challenges ahead

Even before the ink dried on the AU convention, many were already pointing to the numerous challenges it will face. First is the challenge of ratification. To come into force, the convention needs to be formally endorsed by 15 countries. Kamalia Ridderbos of IDMC suggested to *Africa Renewal* that "it is unlikely that we will see all the 53 African countries ratifying the convention."

However, Ms. Ridderbos asserts, enough governments will likely ratify the document to make it binding. The 11 signatories to the Great Lakes protocol are expected to adopt the AU convention. The 15 members of the Southern African Development Community are also said to be committed to it. But as of early March 2010 only Uganda, the host country, had ratified the treaty.

Another issue will be effective implementation. The UN's Mr. Kälin, whose work involves assisting national authorities around the world to protect IDPs, foresees that "the lack of capacity and financial as well as human resources" will be a practical hurdle.

In most countries the needs of IDPs are not matched by the resources allocated for assisting them. "Africa cannot do it alone," says Ms. Joiner of the AU. "That is why we are calling for partnerships."

To make the convention matter for the millions of African IDPs, political commitment by African leaders will be the most important ingredient. "An absence of sufficient political will to adhere to the commitments" would be disastrous, says Mr. Kälin. In some situations, assisting IDPs has been difficult because national authorities have refused to recognize their existence. Invoking their right as sovereign states, they have been reluctant to let in any foreign actors.

Too often, governments or rebel groups have not accepted responsibility for displaced people. They often deny having forced them out of their homes and reject calls to take care of them. In some cases, population displacement has even been part of a military strategy, and civilians have been used as human shields.

Under the former Organization of African Unity, African states were reluctant to interfere in each other's internal affairs, even in the face of massive killings and displacements, elevating the principle of national sovereignty to "absurd proportions," regrets Salim Ahmed Salim, a former OAU secretary-general.

But there has been progress since then. Mr. Kälin believes that while the Kampala Convention recognizes the sovereignty of states, it "understands this concept not as the right of governments to do nothing in situations of internal displacement, but rather as responsibility to assist and protect their IDPs — a responsibility that flows from the fact that they, and nobody else, have the power to do so."

Now that the treaty exists, African governments have a duty to ensure that "the convention becomes a binding instrument," says Jean Ping, the AU Commission president. "At this point it is an achievement, but not an end in itself." ■

Liberian women

from page 9

we have women being empowered. But we have serious concerns about what women are going through in their home setting and in the community."

Ironically, she notes, some of the advances made by Liberian women have complicated their efforts to work together to achieve more. "One thing we've seen in post-war Liberia is serious competition amongst women. It is not helpful in terms of making more gains. They feel they no longer need to collaborate to get there. We have this huge surge of girls going to school and women are excelling, but the collective way we embraced peace building is disintegrating because everyone is seeing herself as the next big thing."

Breaking new ground

Despite the difficulties, Ms. Gbowee says, Liberia's first female president has broken new ground for African women and provided a springboard for further advances — and not only in Liberia. "When you talk to sisters across the continent, they say Ellen is the president for us all," she says. "There is strong backing from women across all countries to see that she succeeds, because they believe that her success is critical for sending other women to the presidency.

"If she does good, everybody — women, men, youth, boys and girls — will see that as an example to follow in other areas. If she doesn't, then the chances for other women are slim. We think people are really watching. And she has emboldened women in other countries to step out. What we as women need to do is take serious advantage of that. Let's put them out there, turn it to our advantage and start making some serious gains." ■

Africans extend solidarity to Haiti

Money, food and medicines from "mother Africa" to her diaspora

Ernest Harsch

In the broad international mobilization to help the stricken people of Haiti, Africa is not lagging behind. Government officials, religious leaders, students, artists and many other Africans responded to the news of the devastating earthquake of 12 January with an immediate outpouring of support and solidarity.

By end-March, some 24 countries in Africa had either donated or pledged more than $51 mn for Haitian relief efforts, according to available reports. That was just a tiny fraction of the total of $3.5 bn given or promised worldwide, but notable nonetheless for the continent with the world's highest poverty rates.

In some countries, critics wondered whether the funds could not be better used at home. Life is certainly hard in Africa, acknowledged Cameroonian music star Manu Dibango. But, he added, "Everyone can do something for the Haitian people, in the name of human dignity. Westerners often do something for Africans. Why not Africans for Africans?"

Haiti, a few days after the earthquake. Though Africa is beset with problems of its own, many countries have rushed aid to the stricken people of Haiti.

'The first black republic'

Historically, Africans have had a particular affinity for Haiti, a country populated almost entirely by descendants of African slaves.

There is a certain pride in Haiti's history. As a coalition of political parties in Burkina Faso pointed out in a solidarity message, Haiti was "the first black republic in the world," a reference to the revolution that drove out the slave owners and ended French colonial rule in 1802 – more than a century and a half before most of Africa won its own freedom.

There are also more direct connections. Numerous African countries have citizens in Haiti, including with the peacekeepers of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and with other international organizations. Some were among the 200,000 believed to have lost their lives.

Among the biggest governmental contributors in Africa are Morocco, which pledged some $34 mn in humanitarian assistance; Ghana, with a vow of $3 mn in emergency relief; the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which has promised $2.5 mn; and Equatorial Guinea, with a pledge of $2 mn.

Citizen responses

Two days after the disaster the South African government pledged an initial R1 mn ($135,000). But South African companies and charities quickly vowed to mount a bigger effort. South African Minister of International Relations Maite Nkoana-Mashabane believes that public contributions will eventually exceed the target of R30 mn ($4 mn) set for the national campaign.

In other African countries as well, civil society groups have not left the initiative to their governments alone. Kenya's local Red Cross is coordinating the collection of money, food and other donations from the public. Church groups from the DRC to Burkina Faso are mobilizing contributions from parishioners. An all-star "Ghana Loves Haiti" benefit concert was held in Accra. Namibia's Chamber of Commerce, youth groups and local musicians also mounted a text-messaging campaign and benefit concert.

In Senegal, health care and social work unions are collecting medicines and new clothes to send to Haiti, and teachers' unions held a "week of solidarity." Musicians from Senegal and other countries organized an "Afrik for Haiti" benefit concert in Dakar and are raising more funds from sales of a group single. The Comite d'initiative Senegal-Haiti, set up by Senegalese and Caribbean residents living in Senegal, argues for a longer-term perspective that looks beyond emergency relief to rebuilding, including by funding scholarships for Haitian students.

A collective of university professors from Benin, Ghana, Guadeloupe, Guinea, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan and the US are planning to fill a ship with goods from various countries along the West African coast and sail it to Haiti. The aim, said Senegalese academic Malick Ndiaye, is to "deliver a message from mother Africa to her sons and daughters across the Atlantic." ■

A F R I C A

AGENDA

22–23 April 2010, New Haven, CT (USA) — Yale Symposium on Asia-Africa Relations. On the theme "The New Scramble for Africa." Contact Council on African Studies, tel: +1 203 432-9901, fax: +1 203 432-5963, e-mail: africanstudies@yale.edu, website: www.yale.edu/macmillan/african/contact.shtml

3–14 May 2010, UN Headquarters, New York (USA) — Commission on Sustainable Development. Among other topics, this session will focus on transport, chemicals, waste management and mining. Tel: +1 212 963-8102, fax: +1 212 963-4260, e-mail: dsd@un.org, website: www.un.org/esa/dsd

7 May–7 June 2010, Dakar (Senegal) — Dak'Art 2010. The ninth biennale of contemporary African art. Tel: +221 33 823 09 18, fax: +221 33 821 16 32, e-mail: info@biennaledakar.org, website: www.biennaledakar.org

12–14 May 2010 Cape Town (South Africa) — Wind Power Africa 2010. Organized by the African Wind Energy Association (AfriWEA). Contact: Denise Spaull, +27 21 689-7881, e-mail: denise@windenergyafrica.com, website: www.windenergyafrica.com

18–19 May 2010 Yaounde (Cameroon) — Africa, an Opportunity for the World. With 500 experts from across Africa, the conference will celebrate the 50th anniversary of independence of 17 African countries with the 2nd Salon Economique (economic fair) of the continent's development. Contact the National Organizing Committee, tel: +237 22 22 51 07 / 22 22 09 47, fax: +237 22 20 35 16, e-mail: cabinet@minepat.gov.cm

26–28 May 2010, Lusaka (Zambia) — eLearning Africa. Contact: Ralf Steinmetz, tel: +49 (0)30-310 38 04-0, fax: +49 (0)30-3104 8184-99, e-mail: info@elearning-africa.com, website: www.elearning-africa.com

2–3 May 2010, Arusha (Tanzania) — Tokyo International Conference on African Development, ministerial follow-up meeting. Contact: Kaoru Ishii, tel: +255 (0)22 2116226, e-mail: kaoru.ishii@undp.org, website: www.unsiteo.org

2–4 June 2010, Nairobi (Kenya) — Green Business Africa Summit and Expo 2010. Contact: Dan Kyalo, tel: +254 20 248 7420, e-mail: info@eventsmanagementmedia.com, website: www.greenbusinessafricaexpo.com

11 June 2010, Beres, Paris (France) — Tenth International Forum on African Perspectives. Organized by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development with the African Development Bank and the French Ministry of Economy, Industry and Employment. Contact Elodie Masson, tel: +33 1 45 24 82 00, fax: +33 1 45 24 85 00, e-mail: DEV.EMEA@oecd.org, website: www.oecd.org

26–27 June 2010, Toronto (Canada) — G-20 Summit. The Group of 20 is a forum for industrialized and developing nations to discuss key issues in the global economy. Contact Caroline Fragonis, tel: +1 613 944-2865, website: www.g20.org

29 June–1 July 2010, Basel (Switzerland) — Africa Energy Forum. African energy power and gas conference. Contact Reed Cargill, tel: +44 (0) 20 8542 8686, fax: +44 (0) 20 8542 4172, e-mail: cargill@reedglobal.co.uk, website: www.reedpmi.co.uk/AEF/AEF2010

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE

8–10 March 2010, Abuja (Nigeria) — High-Level Conference on Development of Agribusiness and Agro-Industries in Africa. Under the auspices of the African Union. Contact Michael Evangelos, tel: +43 1 260 26 3771, e-mail: michael.evangelos@unido.org, website: www.unido.org

16–18 March 2010, Durban (South Africa) — Africa Health Facilities Conference. Contact: Laurel Moore, tel: +27 11 646 3048, fax: +27 11 646 1234, e-mail: conferences@healthfacilities.com, website: www.africa-health-facilities.com

22–26 March, Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) — World Urban Forum 5. On the theme "The Right to the City — Bridging the Urban Divide." Contact: UN-HABITAT, WUF5 Secretariat, tel: +254 20 7623334, fax: +254 20 7624175, e-mail: wuf@unhabitat.org, website: www.unhabitat.org/wuf

A F R I C A

BOOKS

Protecting Human Security in Africa, ed. Ademola Abass (Oxford University Press, Northamptonshire, UK, 2010, 400 pp, hb $140)

The Rise of China and India in Africa: Challenges, opportunities and critical interventions, eds. Fantu Cheru and Cyril Obi (Zed Books, London, UK, 2010, 272 pp, hb £70)

Chinese and African Perspectives on China in Africa, eds. Axel Harneit-Sievers, Stephen Marks and Sanusha Naidu (Fahamu Books, Oxford, UK 2010, 298 pp, pb €16.95)

L'adieu aux armes? Parcours d'anciens combattants, ed. Nathalie Duclos (Karthala, Paris, France, 2010, 432 pp, pb €29)

Civil War in African States: The Search for Security by Ian Spears (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, USA, 2010, 281 pp, hb $65)

The Poor under Globalization in Asia, Latin America and Africa, eds. Machiko Nissanke and Erik Thorbecke (Oxford University Press, Northamptonshire, UK, 2010, 400 pp, hb $99)

Le Mythe du developpement durable en Afrique noire by Issé Amouzou (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2010, 280 pp, pb €25)

Le developpement en Afrique: Un devoir pour les Africaines by Ignace Gnan (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2010, 310 pp, pb €29.50)

Globalization in Africa: Recolonization or Renaissance? by Padraig Carmody (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, USA, 2010, 280 pp, hb $55)

Africa's Liberation: The Legacy of Nyerere, eds. Cambi Chachage and Annar Cassam (Fahamu Books, Oxford, UK, 2010, 224 pp, pb £12.95)

Le Bonheur de servir: Reflexions et reperes by Albert Tevoedjre (Archipel, Paris, France, 2010, 332 pp, pb €19.95)

Development Without Destruction: The UN and Global Resource Management by Nico Schrijver (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, USA, 2010, 312 pp, hb $75)

Systemes de production et durabilite dans les pays du sud by Benedicte Dubsand and Alain François (Karthala, Paris, France, 2010, 512 pp, pb €28)

The Truth about Trade: The Real Impact of Liberalisation by Clive George (Zed Books, London, UK, 2010, 224 pp, £65)

Neoliberal Africa: The Impact of Global Social Engineering by Graham Harrison (Zed Books, London, UK, 2010, 192 pp, hb £65)

Femmes de tête, femmes d'honneur: combats des femmes, d'Afrique et d'ailleurs, ed. Henri Mova Sakanyi (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2010, 172 pp, pb €16.50)

Les colères de la faim: Pourquoi l'Afrique s'est embrasée en 2008 by Jean-Célestin Edjangue (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2010, 86 pp, pb €11)

Africa's Development Impasse: Rethinking the Political Economy of Transformation by Stephan Andreasson (Zed Books, London, UK, 2010, 256 pp, hb £70)

Speaking Truth to Power: Selected Pan-African Postcards by Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem (Fahamu Books, Oxford, UK, 2010, 270 pp, pb £14.95)

Reformer les armees africaines: En quête d'une nouvelle stratégie, eds. Axel Augé and Patrick Klougen (Karthala, Paris, France, 2010, 228 pp, pb €23)

L'agriculture senegalaise à l'épreuve du marche by Guillaume Duteurtre, Mbene Dieye Faye and Papa Nouhine Dieye (Karthala, Paris, France, 2010, 456 pp, pb €29)

Nation-States and the Challenges of Regional Integration in West Africa: The Case of Nigeria, ed. Yomi Akinyeye (Karthala, Paris, France, 2010, 264 pp, pb €24)

Travail social et Sida en Afrique: au cœur des souffrances by Berthe Florence Ymele Nouazi (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2010, 124 pp, pb €13)

Peace versus Justice: The Dilemmas of Transitional Justice in Africa, eds. Chandra Lekha Sriram and Suren Pillay (James Currey, Abingdon, UK, 2010, 387 pp, pb $37.95)

De l'ouvrier immigré au travailleur sans papier: Les étrangers dans la modernisation du salariat, eds. Alain Morice and Swanie Potot (Karthala, Paris, France, 2010, 336 pp, pb €28)

AFRICA WATCH

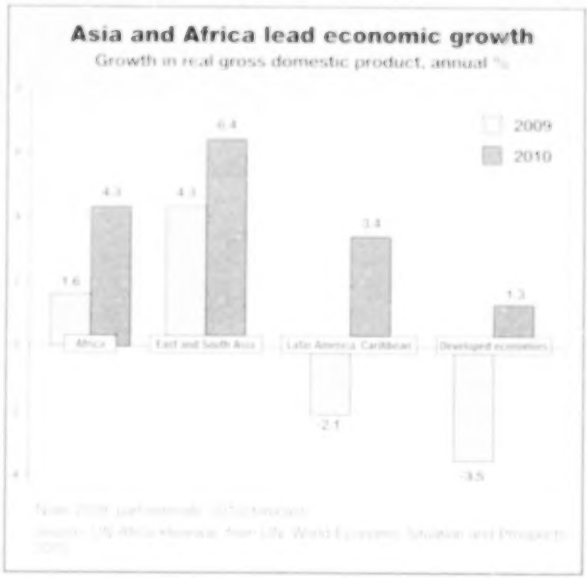
ECONOMIC GROWTH

Good prospects for Africa

Much like the United Nations — but with minor differences in numbers — both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the African Development Bank (ADB) project a swift recovery for African economies in 2010, following a global recession and disastrous performances in 2009. During a tour of three African countries in March, IMF President Dominique Strauss-Kahn predicted that growth for sub-Saharan Africa will hit 4.5 per cent this year. Shortly before, an equally optimistic Donald Kaberuka, president of the ADB, said that his institution expects Africa's economy to grow between 4.5 and 5.5 per cent in 2010. Already, in the latest *World Economic and Situation and Prospects*, published in January, the UN predicted that African growth will reach 4.3 per cent in 2010, up from 1.6 per cent the previous year.

Both the IMF and the UN attribute Africa's recovery to the positive performance of the subcontinent's biggest economies (South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya) and the revival of the global economy. Africa's growth, the two institutions also note, will be second only to Asia's. The UN and the IMF further suggest that African countries weathered the global recession better than most other regions of the world, partly as a result of the prudent fiscal policies that many governments implemented earlier.

Yet, as the UN report regrets, the crisis in 2009 "marked an unfortunate reversal of hard-earned social and economic gains that had been made in reducing both poverty and the large gap which separates Africa from its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)." ■



APPOINTMENTS

Mr. **Anthony Lake**, from the US, has been appointed by the UN Secretary-General as executive director of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). He first joined the US Foreign Service in 1962 and has had a long career, including as national security adviser under President Bill Clinton. He also served on the board of the US Fund for UNICEF, with a stint as chairman from 2004 to 2007. Most recently, he was a professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Washington, DC. At UNICEF, Mr. Lake replaces Ann Veneman, whose term ended on 30 April.

Ms. **Margot Wallström** of Sweden has been appointed as the special representative of the UN Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict. A former member of the Swedish parliament, she has been actively involved in promoting the participation of women in peace and security related issues. She also spearheaded campaigns to implement Security Council resolutions on halting sexual violence against civilians in conflict zones.

The Secretary-General has appointed Mr. **Haile Menkerios** of South Africa as his special representative for Sudan. At the time of his appointment, Mr. Menkerios was assistant secretary-general for political affairs, and previously the UN's deputy special representative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Before joining the UN, he represented Eritrea in various capacities, including as ambassador to Ethiopia and permanent representative to the UN.

COPENHAGEN ACCORD

UN panel on funding climate change action

Three months after the December 2009 international climate change conference in Copenhagen, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed a panel to examine how to mobilize resources for reducing and dealing with the effects of climate change in developing countries. The panel will be co-chaired by Meles Zenawi, prime minister of Ethiopia and Africa's chief negotiator at the Copenhagen talks, and Gordon Brown, the UK prime minister. It will review potential sources of revenue and submit initial recommendations to a climate negotiating session scheduled for 31 May–11 June in Bonn, Germany. Its final report is expected by November 2010.

In the Copenhagen Accord finalized at the conference, world leaders agreed to demands by African and other developing countries for help in facing the adverse effects of climate change. The accord included provisions for financial assistance of up to $30 bn over the three years of 2010-2012, with a conditional increase to some $100 bn by 2020.

Other members of the panel include Jens Stoltenberg, prime minister of Norway; Donald Kaberuka, president of the African Development Bank; and George Soros, chairman of the Soros investment and financial services company. ■